

REMARKS

Applicants request favorable reconsideration and allowance of the subject application in view of the preceding amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 1-7, 9, 10, 12-20, 22, 24, 25, and 27-31 are presented for consideration. Claims 1, 9, 12, 14, 16, 24, and 30 are independent. Claims 1, 9, 14, 16, and 17 have been amended to clarify features of the subject invention. Support for these changes can be found in the original application, as filed. Therefore, no new matter has been added.

Applicants submit that Claims 1-7, 9, 10, 12-20, 22, 24, 25, and 27-31 patentably define features of the exposure apparatus, the atmosphere substituting method and the device manufacturing method of the present invention, at least for the reasons set forth in the Amendment After Final Rejection, filed on August 2, 2004. Accordingly, Applicants submit that the instant application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration, withdrawal of the rejections set forth in the final Office Action dated June 1, 2004 and an early Notice of Allowance are requested.

Applicants' attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should be directed to our address listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



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